

The larger districts are the most satisfactory to deal with. Thus the County Councils have on the whole done fairly good work when the necessity has been pointed out. So, too, some of the larger boroughs and Road Boards have shown a certain amount of willingness to comply with the suggested reforms. It is dealing with the small boroughs and Road Boards that the difficulty is most marked. There appear to be two reasons for this—one being the personal element which obtrudes itself. Thus Jones, Brown, and Robinson form quite a formidable party in the forthcoming election of Chairman or Mayor, and Smith, the present occupier, knows he need not expect to retain his seat if he prosecutes one of the clique for allowing his tenant's house to become ruinous, and should he be so foolish as to suggest raising the rates to enable the drains to be cleansed or the night soil removed he may as well retire at once. Being between the devil and the deep sea, he finds his only refuge is in pacifying the Health Department with fair promises, while Jones and Co. are satisfied by his subsequent inaction. I have been asked by members of small bodies to send them a peremptory demand to do certain work, so that the blame may be borne by the Health Department, as forcing their hands. The second difficulty lies in the poverty of these small bodies. They are often at the end of their rating-power, and their yearly income is enough only to meet the charitable-aid rate—a really large item—pay road-surfaceman's wages, with a little extra for his valuable services as Sanitary Inspector, and buy a few loads of road-metal. Sanitary measures may be very necessary, but there are no funds available, and it is hopeless going to the ratepayers for sanction for a special loan. The majority of the ratepayers are of the class who think that the whole duty of the civic representatives is to keep down the rates, and they regard dirt and disease as necessary evils. As an official of a local body remarked to me when objecting to the proposed measures for checking an outbreak of enteric, "What is a case or two of typhoid after all?" There is much of this spirit in the Auckland District. Two years ago when plague first reached New Zealand they were alarmed, but rather than bestir themselves preferred to bury their heads after the manner of the ostrich, shutting out facts, and declaring that they could not and would not believe plague had appeared in Auckland. They are now more accustomed to it, and remark apathetically that "It is all right: it can't spread in such a city." What they have done to deserve the intervention on their behalf of a special Providence it is hard to see. Thorough reform will come only when the general public has had a sharp lesson, and their eyes are opened to the fact that neglect leads to trouble in this part of the world just as it did in the Old Country.

It would be unjust not to recognise the fact that there are some members of the various bodies who show up conspicuously on behalf of reform, and where by a happy chance they are in the majority their district becomes almost a model of sanitary righteousness. Even certain suburban Road Boards may be thus singled out, where the majority of the inhabitants are of the more enlightened classes, and poverty and overcrowding are unknown. Where the Mayor or Chairman is a strong man, and alive to sanitary needs, even though his followers should be otherwise inclined, his influence is often sufficient to guide their decisions in the right direction.

When it has been possible to spend the time in explaining and arguing the point with the body as a whole, and with the majority of its members, I have generally found that the point could be carried; but with so large a number of districts to deal with it is quite impossible to give each this individual attention.

To sum up the matter, the mechanism requires to be simplified by combining the small elements with the larger bodies, and thus avoiding to a great extent the petty questions which retard progress—local jealousies, want of funds, and the Councillor who represents a clique. Even though by so doing one would merge those districts which have been conspicuous for their advanced condition, they would leaven the whole, and their influence would be more widespread. Auckland City, I think, would be better in every way were it to include Parnell, Newmarket, Mount Eden, Eden Terrace, Grey Lynn, and Arch Hill. The thirteen local bodies which represent the remainder of Eden County could well be combined under one County Council. Country Road Boards and Town Boards are absolutely useless as administrators of public health, and should be merged in the counties of which they form part. The hopelessness of dealing with the twenty-eight little Road Boards which comprise Manukau County would be avoided were the Counties Act to be enforced over this area. Petty boroughs, such as Te Aroha and Birkenhead, would not suffer were they to have their sanitary affairs administered by the Councils of the counties in which they are situated. Larger boroughs, such as Whangarei and the Thames, would be strengthened by including the populous parts of the counties adjoining them.

With this increase in size, greater power of rating and borrowing and of executing works could safely be granted, and reforms would be possible which at present, owing to sub-divisions and lack of cohesion, are out of the question.

THE SANITARY CONDITION OF THE DIFFERENT DISTRICTS.

Auckland City.

The statistics given above show that Auckland is behindhand in matters hygienic, and an inspection bears out the fact. In every branch of sanitation there is evident room for improvement, from water-supply to refuse-removal. Fortunately there is a forward tendency now, thanks to the energy of His Worship the Mayor, Mr. Kidd. The movement is slow and relapses are frequent, but it exists, and only requires careful nursing. That there has been neglect in the past is evident from the large number of ruinous dwellings—hovels—which would not be permitted in the East London slums. The older parts of the city have fallen into decay, and a clean sweep should have been made years ago.

The drainage in these parts is of that primitive type which has long been abolished in more energetic cities. Even more modern parts show faults which indicate lack of system about the inspection—jerry-built houses, drain-connections which would not stand the slightest test,